

Conflict

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

conflict: a struggle between opposing forces that creates tension or suspense in a story. A conflict may be within a character, between two characters, or between a character and an outside force, such as nature or society.

external conflict: a struggle between a character and an outside force. The outside force could be another character, society, or a force of nature.

internal conflict: a struggle within a character's mind. An internal conflict may occur when a character faces a difficult decision or conflicting feelings.

HERE'S HOW

Step 1: Look for the exciting parts. Conflict adds interest to a story's plot.

Step 2: Recall the problems or struggle the main character faces.

Step 3: Decide whether the main conflict is external or internal.

Step 4: Look for secondary, or less serious, conflicts.

EXAMPLES: CONFLICT

Once there was a rabbit named Rabbit and a turtle named Turtle. Turtle walked very slowly and Rabbit was very fast. Rabbit talked all the time about how fast he was. This made Turtle angry. "Rabbit," said Turtle, "I am tired of hearing you brag about how fast you are. Let's have a race to see if you are really as fast as you say." Rabbit quickly agreed, and the race got underway.

Rabbit's bragging causes an **external conflict with another character**, turtle.

Their race adds suspense to the story.

Tom typed furiously, pouring out all his hurt feelings and anger. Rereading the letter, he was surprised by how vicious he had been. Still, it served her right! Stuffing the letter in an envelope, he hurried to the post office. At the mailbox, though, he paused. Mailing the letter would mean the end of their friendship. Did he really want that? Or should he wait until he cooled down to discuss the problem?

Tom has conflicting feelings. He's very angry with a friend, but he still values their friendship.

Tom faces an **internal conflict**. He struggles with how best to mend his hurt feelings and whether or not to mail the angry letter.